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### **INVESTING IN PEOPLE**

(Health)

#### **Community approach for pneumonia treatment in poor nations suggested**

By JENNY F. MANONGDO

Experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) recently suggested that a community approach on treating pneumonia should be practiced in poor countries to prevent more children's deaths.

Citing a study done in Pakistan by researchers from Boston University School of Public Health and supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), it was found out that pneumonia could be treated effectively with antibiotic pills at home.

The research result was published in the Lancet medical journal early this month.

The test involved 2,037 children with severe pneumonia who were randomly assigned to get either injectable antibiotics in a hospital or antibiotic pills at home.

This was the first time such a trial was done to compare the outcome of hospital treatment and antibiotic pills given at home in the treatment of pneumonia.

“The potential impact of these results is enormous,” Dr. Shamim Qazi, medical officer with the WHO's Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development said in a statement.

The test proved the safety and efficacy of treating the disease with oral antibiotics at home was just as effective as the treatment in a hospital setting.

According to WHO, pneumonia is the largest single killer of children under five-years-old around the world. Almost four children die from pneumonia every minute and about 60 percent of pneumonia cases in the developing world are caused by bacteria and can be treated with antibiotics. Most cases of pneu-

monia in developed countries are viral.

WHO officials believe the study could help developing countries manage pneumonia cases effectively and save a significant number of lives every year.

The world's health experts agreed that many children affected with pneumonia in developing countries are oftentimes not brought to hospitals because parents cannot leave their homes to accompany the sick child.

WHO experts added that children afflicted with pneumonia risk acquiring infections from in crowded hospital wards.

A community-based approach would bring treatment to people's homes, so that children with pneumonia can be identified and begin treatment before the onset of life-threatening complications, WHO noted.

**(Source: Manila Bulletin, 1/14/08, page B9)**